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ABSTRACT

A longstanding debate in education pits advocates of liberal curricula against advocates of "back-to-basics," fundamental education. The study described in this publication examined the long term results of a fundamental elementary school that began operating in August 1978 with 347 students. During the 1989-90 school year, the first group of students to have completed all 6 years at the fundamental school graduated from high school. Subjects were selected from the fundamental school and two other district schools (C-1 and C-2) for comparisons on selected measures of student achievement and participation. A total of 420 students were included in the final sample: Fundamental had 70 students, C-1 had 192, and C-2 had 158. Results indicate that students who attended the fundamental school throughout their elementary school years: (1) scored higher than comparison school students on some subscales of standardized tests at grade 6, but not at either grade 9 or grade 11; (2) did not take more advanced-placement courses in high school than comparison school students; (3) did not achieve more academic honors in high school; (4) participated more in school activities and were found in leadership positions more often than were comparison school students; and (5) exhibited somewhat differing rates of dropout, withdrawal, or absenteeism than did comparison school students. (Contains 7 tables and 25 references.) (MLF)

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